FORESTS (SHRIMATI MANEKA GANDHI): (a) Afforestation of deforested area is an ecologically desirable objective, irrespective of the purpose for which such deforstation has taken place.

(b) The National Forest Policy, 1988 provides that as far as possible a forest based industry should meet its raw material requirements, preferably by establishment of a direct relationship between the factory and the individuals who can grow the raw materials on their lands. It also provides that natural forests will not be made available to industries for meeting their need of raw materials.

Besides, Import of pulp and waste paper has been put on OGL and the import duty on these items is also kept relatively low and use of agricultural waste for manufacture of paper is being actively supported and encouraged by the Government.

These measures are expected to reduce the demand of forest based industry on forests for raw materials.

"Ban on felling of trees for sleepers for Railways"

418. SHRI B. K. HARIPRASAD: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have banned felling of trees for sleepers for railways and asked the railways to grow their own trees; and

(b) whether Government propose to ban use of wooden sleepers for railways and also compel them to grow trees on their land failing which unused land should be confiscated and used for growing trees?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRIMATI MANEKA GANDHI): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Government propose to phase out use of wooden sleepers by Railways through substitution by alternative material. Wherever possible plantations are already being done on land of Railway Department.

Effect of refuelling of U.S. war planes on the war scenario

419. DR. G. VIJAYA MOHAN REDDY: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the U.S. have threatened to use nuclear weapons against Iraq in utter disregard to world public opinion;

(b) whether Governments policy of allowing U.S. war planes to be refuelled in Bombay and Madras, would encourage the U.S. in its aggressive policy; and

(c) whether the Government of India have expressed their protest to the U.S. Government against such threat ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE (SHRI KAMAL MORARKA): (a) During a television interview on 2 February 1991, US Vice President Quayle said: "I just can't imagine President Bush making the decision...to use chemical or nuclear weapons under any circumstances."

The US Vice President suggested that allied conventional forces were so superior that a "proper response" to a first use of chemical weapons by the Iraqis "would be to continue our very devastating campaign with conventional weapons". He indicated however that the administration will "never rule any options out".

(b) The Government allowed transit and refuelling facilities only for transport aircraft. This facility was given on a clear assurance from the US Government that the transport aircraft would be used solely for transporting non-lethal supplies and for evacuation of personnel on humanitarian, medical and emergency grounds.

(c) Government have issued a statement on 8 February 1991, expressing deep concern on this issue. A copy of the *statement* is attached.

Statement

Government of India is deeply concerned over statements made recently by the parties engaged in the Gulf conflict, emanating from very high levels, regarding the possible use of nuclear and chemical weapons. The use of chemical wea-

pons is regarded as inhuman and reprehensible by the entire world community and is prohibited by international law. The use of nuclear weapons can unleash death and devastation beyond the theatre of war, affecting both combatants and non-combatants alike. It constitutes a threat to the very survival of mankind. The use of nuclear weapons has been regarded by the United Nations General Assembly as a violation of the UN Charter and a crime against humanity. Moreover, the Security Council, while prescribing the use of "necessary means" in its Resolution No. 678, could not have conceived including nuclear weapons as falling within these means. The Government of India calls upon all parties engaged in the Gulf conflict strictly to abjure the use of nuclear or chemical weapons or any other weapons of mass destruction.

Sri Lankan Defence Minister's warning to civilian population

420. DR. G. VIJAYA MOHAN REDDY: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Sri Lanka's Minister of Defence has warned the civilian population of Jaffna to quit, as aerial bombing will continue;

(b) whether this will increase the influx of refugees into India; and

(c) whether Government propose to take up this problem with Government of Sri Lanka?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE (SHRI KAMAL MORARKA): (a) Government have seen press reports that the Sri Lankan Minister of Defence had said that if the people of Jaffna wanted security, then they should keep away from the war zone.

(b) and (c) During former External Affairs Minister's recent visit to Colombo, the need to find a political solution to the ethnic issue had been reaffirmed. Government also expressed distress at reports of civilian casualties and damage to property due to continuing aerial attacks in North Sri Lanka and concern that the escalation of hostilities could renew the refugee influx and adversely affect the process towards a negotiated political settlement, with the participation of all concerned parties.

Refuelling of US Airforce planes at Indian Airports

421. SHRI SUKOMAL SEN:
SHRI M. A. BABY:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have permitted at Indian Airports the refuelling of U.S. Airforce planes which are involved in Gulf war;

(b) the number of U.S. Airforce planes which have till now been allowed refuelling and what is the total amount of aviation fuel spent for the purpose; and

(c) when the order for refuelling of these planes was issued alongwith the terms and conditions thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE (SHRI KAMAL MORARKA): (a) Government had given transit and refuelling facilities to US Air Force transport aircraft at Indian airports. These facilities were given on a clear assurance from the US Government that these flights would be used solely for transporting non-lethal supplies and for evacuation of personnel on humanitarian, medical and emergency considerations.

(b) Since the Gulf crisis, 136 US air force transport aircraft have availed of transit and refuelling facility. During the months of January and February approximately 32 lakh litres of fuel has been provided.

(c) In the present context, the permission for refuelling was granted on 28th December, 1990, on the basis of an assurance that the flights would be used solely for transporting non-lethal supplies and for evacuation of personnel on humanitarian, medical and emergency grounds.